

# Mrs. Belk and Her Land - Both Treasures in Marion County

By *James Jennings*

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**M**rs. Eguel Belk of Marion County is a very busy person. She is a volunteer with both the cooperative extension service and the local hospital, an active member of the Community Resource Development Committee, and chair of the Marion County Health Council. Not surprisingly, she is also the recipient of the Volunteer of the Year Award!

Yet, she still finds time to work on her property and has earned the distinction of being the first minority landowner ever nominated for the TREASURE Forest award in Marion County. She has lived on the farm in the Shottsville community since 1942 where she and her husband raised cattle and grew corn until he passed away in 1989.

A letter from the Natural Resource Conservation Service announcing cost-share funds for tree planting and site prep prompted her to look into converting the fallow land into productive land. She continued reading and talking with local Alabama Forestry Commission associates until she decided that this was a wonderful oppor-



*Mrs. Eguel Belk keeps busy on her farm in the Shottsville Community.*

tunity to make her 36 acres productive once more.

Her first step was to subsoil, plant superior loblolly pines, and band-spray herbicide to control herbaceous weeds under the Forestry Incentive Program (FIP) cost-share program. She then conducted a timber sale to harvest a low-

quality upland mixed stand that she plans to convert into a more productive pine stand. There are also 9 acres of naturally-regenerated pines.

Two acres of wildlife openings have been developed to complement her forest management plan. Different age classes of trees around the property provide excellent nesting and cover for both game and non-game species. She retained soft mast-producing trees along the edges of the planted pasture to offer a nutritional supplement to the many deer, turkey, and squirrels that make their homes on the farm.

It has been said that if you want something done, ask a busy person to do it. It seems that busy people often have the energy and desire to achieve and to encourage others to do the

same. Mrs. Belk sees forest management as an opportunity to make her farm productive again and to make a sound investment in her financial future. Her insight and her willingness to share it with others make her a true Hidden TREASURE for Marion County and for Alabama. 🌲